

ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
4141 N. Third Street –Phoenix, AZ 85012
Thursday – March 9, 2006

M I N U T E S

Commission Members Present

Webb Ellis, Chairperson
Linda Fulkerson
Robert Boyd

Tom Dingwall
Phillip Quochytewa
Kenneth Yamanouchi

Commission Members Absent:

Mary Ellen Piotrowski, Vice Chairperson

ADVS Members Present

Michael Klier, Assistant Deputy Director
Michelle Cummins, HR Administrator
B. J. Gottesman, Administrative Assistant

Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner
Lee Borgen, VBC

Call to Order - Chairman Ellis called the meeting to order at 10:01 and led the pledge of allegiance. No guests were in attendance to welcome or introduce.

Chairman Ellis announced that Mary Ellen Piotrowski is scheduled for a procedure on Monday at Boswell Memorial Hospital. Flowers are being sent from ADVS and the Advisory Commission.

Approval of Minutes - February 10, 2006 minutes were approved as written; February 11, 2006 minutes were approved as corrected.

Communications - Thank you letters were sent to the Commander of the American Legion Post in Safford and to the Public Information Officer for the San Carlos Apache Tribe. One will also be sent to Dave Etter. Larry Brown's resignation has been accepted and his name will be removed from the letterhead.

Agency Announcements and Updates

Agency Activities – Mike Klier

- Rep. Tom O'Halleran has been working with the Sedona Chamber of Commerce to provide troops returning from Afghanistan and Iraq complimentary gift packages. Complimentary packets include resort stays, bike ride certificates and other gifts and activities. He hopes this program will be expanded to other cities and communities to welcome returning veterans.
- The C-1 Unit patio will be completely redesigned to better serve the Alzheimer's residents. A \$15,000 donation from the Veterans Medical Leadership Conference will be used for the construction. Catherine Corbin, ASVH Administrator, has done a phenomenal job obtaining support for the Home, especially dealing with dementia. Attitudes Campus in collaboration with Hospice of the Valley was awarded a grant by the Legacy Foundation. Health Services Advisory Group (an organization involved in quality improvement and are contracted by the Federal Government to participate in pilot programs in cultural transformation of nursing homes), invited the Home to participate in a program.

- Mr. Klier has been working with DES regarding a cooperative effort between ADVS and DES offices statewide. The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative Programs (LVER) proposed arrangement to have DES employees move to ADVS to support and assistance with Veterans issues is also supported by Chairman Ellis. He informed members that DD214 can be received quickly by applying on the website.

Legislation – Mike Klier

- All veterans' issues bills needed by the agency are going forward without opposition. The Governor's budget includes funding for the additional VBCs, Veteran Home in Tucson, and other issues arising from the Veterans Task Force. The Commission needs a list of veterans' budget items from the ADVS Director. A letter will be sent to all legislators urging them to support the various bills. The tone of the letter will focus on treating the veteran right because it is the "right thing to do." Representatives of various veterans organizations who attend the Unified Arizona Veterans meeting April 1st will be given information to send out similar letters. Due to the push to get the budget through, the letter needs to be written and distributed within the next week or so to legislators. UAV will be asked to draft a letter of support for all Arizona legislators. Affixing electronic signatures to the letter will hasten the process.
- The Advisory Commissioners will receive emails of hearings. The Director will prepare a one page summary of the issues on the Governor's budget. Commissioners need to register with ALIS at the kiosks located at the Arizona Senate or the House. From that point on, registered ALIS users can remotely access information.

San Carlos Meeting Held February 10, 2006 – Chairman Ellis

Chairman Ellis thanked Commissioner Quochytewa for doing a great job at the meeting. There were several issues that surfaced:

- Commissioner Dingwall will assist veteran service organizations on reservations in obtaining weapons and ammunition for military honors. Because of the level of difficulty in completing the 11-page application, the suggestion was made to provide assistance to the San Carlos Tribe and other tribes as well, to apply. Commissioner Dingwall will follow up on the 11-page document. Contact will be made with the Michigan organization that provides guns and ammunition to see if this could be expedited.
- Donations for vans to transport veterans from rural locations are not limited to veteran service organizations. Donations can be made by any organization. Information should be sent to each organization to help them understand how the VA transportation process works.
- Mike Klier offered to provide information regarding an association that locates vehicles for organizations to Dave Etter and other areas including the Show Low region and Flagstaff. Because individual organizations cannot afford the auto insurance, the vans must be in the VA's possession so that they pay to insure the vehicles.
- The Governor invited Phillip Quochytewa to serve on the Arizona Indian Commission.
- Luella Emmons asked Roger Begay to assist Mr. Palmer with a claim. Mike Klier will follow up with Ms. Emmons to make sure that the veteran has been helped.
- Commissioner Quochytewa thanked the Commission for their support and suggested the Commission hold future meetings to discuss American Indian veterans issues.

Safford Regional Meeting Held February 11, 2006 – Chairman Ellis

- Mike Klier will get information regarding the van issues to Webb Ellis and give it to UAV.
- During the discussion regarding tribal casinos, Commissioner Yamanouchi suggested that funding availability be explored. Ramiro Bustamonte from the Pasqua Yaqui Tribe stated that

there is a defense supply agency in Colorado that would have free vans. The Commission will follow-up with Mr. Bustamonte on contact information regarding surplus property and get a VBC to his tribe per his requested. Mr. Bustamonte will be invited to attend the next region meeting.

- Commissioner Quochytewa will contact the Arizona Intertribal Council again.
- Individual issues were handled on the spot during the region meeting. There was excellent problem solving during the meeting.

Yuma Stand Down Update – Linda Fulkerson

The Stand Down was handled very well. A thank you letter will be sent to the Mayor of Yuma for his support. Bill Thornton and his committee have obtained grants (\$4,000 from Wal Mart, a \$1,000 from Target and received numerous grants from various veterans organizations and the auxiliaries) and donations from local businesses. The cost to put the event together was \$2,000 and there is \$10,000 in the bank for the Stand Down to be held next April. The event averaged between 30-40 participants on Friday and Saturday and continued through mid-day Sunday.

No VBCs were present at the Stand Down. Mike Klier will look into that situation. No judges or attorneys were available as planned. Ms. Fulkerson will write a letter expressing regrets that they couldn't attend and inform that they did have veterans who seriously needed their help.

Commissioner Fulkerson was applauded for her efforts. Original founders of the San Diego Stand Down provided her with a copy of a "cook book" for holding a Stand Down. A copy will be sent to Gabe Forsberg to copy and sent to those interested in establishing Stand Downs. Next year's Stand Down will be held in April.

Schedule/Plan Next Regional Meeting

Commissioner Yamanouchi is the only Commissioner working in Region 1, because of vacancies on the Commission. Chairman Ellis will work with the Janie Miller, Region 10 VFW Adjutant, to schedule the regional next meeting in Casa Grande. There are a number of Indian tribes in the Casa Grande area, which makes it a very attractive location. Commissioner Quochytewa will assist with an unofficial meeting held on the reservation with the Native American representatives on the Friday before the regular meeting.

A motion was made and carried to hold the meeting in Casa Grande on May 12 and 13. Dates and location are subject to change depending on the availability of meeting locations. Chairman Ellis will send a notice to Adjutant Miller so that she can request support from the VFW. All 22 Indian Tribes will also receive meeting information. Mr. Quochytewa will contact the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Tribe and try to reserve their culture center as a meeting place for the Indian Tribes on Friday, May 12 – possibly in Sacaton.

To advertise the meeting that Commissioner Quochytewa will put together: A letter will be sent out to all tribes, especially include Ramiro Bustamonte who attended the Safford meeting. Commissioner Yamanouchi and Chairman Ellis will work with Gabe to set up the meeting in Casa Grande. Ken Yamanouchi will work out details with the hotel through the Travel Coordinator.

Discussion and Determination of Region Commissioners Responsibilities

The Commission reviewed the outline of responsibilities of the Region Commissioners, as it relates to region meeting. Linda Fulkerson had issues with forming a committee for each region assigned. Her region is so large that it may be unworkable to have all counties working together. Commissioner Boyd and Chairman Ellis also had concerns with the Commissioners forming a region committee.

The Commissioners will be responsible for drafting customized letters and send drafts to the Secretary to be completed. The secretary will save a file copy of the letters before sending out correspondence. The chairman will run the business portion of meeting and then turn it over to the region commissioners. A draft of the document will be prepared, reflecting changes discussed.

Open Discussion/Good of the Order Announcements

Commissioner Dingwall - The Sierra Vista cemetery hired an Interment Specialist recently and some individuals from the community voiced concerns about posting the job. There are two classes of jobs with the state; the *covered position* (essentially hourly) that must be posted and covered by personnel rules and the *uncovered position* (salary position) employee. Hiring at the cemetery was not advertised in the local area because it was an uncovered position. Commissioner Dingwall was also told that applicants for certain job could not be asked if they were veterans. He felt that the Department should do everything in its power to solicit veterans to fill vacancies. The consensus was that the Commission took a neutral position regarding specific hiring practices, but encouraged the agency to be as veteran friendly as possible.

Mike Klier - The situation regarding hiring staff is PDQ driven (Position Description Questionnaire). If there isn't a specific job requirement in the PDQ that relates to veterans status, you cannot ask the person if they are a veteran. The posting of a position is not required for non-covered positions. In this situation, the vacancy was urgent and there was a qualified applicant immediately available. There wasn't proper time to post the vacancy.

Chairman Ellis - ADVS needs to look at the issue to avoid another similar issue going forward. Mr. Klier said that he would try to resolve the issue in the future and that he was willing to contact the individuals who raised the issue. The Commission supports the department in its efforts to become more veteran friendly.

Commissioner Quochytewa - Announced that the 3rd annual Piastewa Memorial event will be held on March 23. American Indian veteran groups from here and other states will be attending the event.

Chairman Ellis – An Attorney General decision states - As registered lobbyists, we are not legally allowed to contribute to campaign funds, or to any one candidate in the State of Arizona and that includes the \$5 contribution for Clean Elections. The ADVS Director will be responsible for informing the newly appointed Commissioners

Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m. The next meeting will be held on 4/13/06 at the Arizona State Veteran Home.